

Coming Events:



The Bear Marriage

January 26 at 7:30 p.m.
Steilacoom Tribal Cultural Center
1515 Lafayette, Steilacoom

Antoinette Botsford weaves a selection of stories from a wide range of folk traditions along with personal experience to show how bears continue to be teachers to humans.

Father Luigi Rossi Missionary, Chaplain, Pioneer & Story Teller

February 7 at 7:30 p.m.
Immaculate Conception Church
Steilacoom

Ray Egan will be presenting his performance of Father Rossi in Steilacoom's Immaculate Conception Church on Wednesday, February 7th.



This church was built by Catholic soldiers and settlers at Fort Steilacoom in 1856, and father Rossi conducted religious services in it from 1857 to 1859. It was taken apart and moved to Steilacoom in 1863. Egan's performance is based almost verbatim on the memoirs which Rossi wrote and published in Brussels in 1863.

Due to the small size of this historic church, *seating will be by reservation*. Please call Ron or Ardyth Herbel at (206) 584-2246 to reserve your seats. Tickets are a donation of \$4.00 per person. All proceeds will be divided between the church and Fort Steilacoom Museum.

Track to the Future Rail Transit's Turbulent Past & Uncertain Prospects

February 29 at 7:30 p.m.
Fort Steilacoom, Quarters 2
9601 Steilacoom Blvd. S.W.

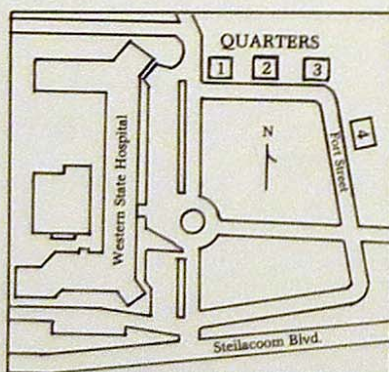
Walt Crowley explores the interaction of political reform, land development, and technology in shaping the public transportation systems of the past, present, and future in the Northwest.

New Century, New Pacific Vistas The Pacific Northwest in 1900

March 21 at 7:30 p.m.
Fort Steilacoom, Quarters 2
9601 Steilacoom Blvd. S.W.

William Woodward traces a story that leads to Seattle's Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in 1909. From the building of a modern American steam and steel navy and coastal defense fortifications to the Klondike gold rush and America's first Southeast Asian war, the audience will explore the trans-Pacific interconnections that continue to define our region.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Tacoma, WA
Permit No. 660



Fort Steilacoom

Vol. XII, No. 4

Fort Steilacoom, Washington

December, 1995

Winter Life on Steilacoom Prairie

1849-1861

By Carol E. Neufeld

The following descriptions hint at what winter was like to the people of Steilacoom Prairie in the middle 1800s. They are brief glimpses of the way the Indian people, farmer Joseph Heath and his Indian workers, and United States government troops adapted to the winter rain and snow storms.

The Indian People

"The Indian people of the lower Puget Sound did not cultivate, neither did they plant. They picked the berries, dug the bulbs, hunted the deer and trapped the fish."¹

In the summer Indian women gathered food and other materials on the Steilacoom prairie. Camas bulbs were dug then cooked and preserved at a nearby village or at a temporary prairie campsite. Cattails and other plants from the marshy edges of the prairie lakes and streams were harvested and dried for making mats and baskets. Medicine women selected and preserved herbal plants. The men hunted deer, grouse, rabbits, and other animals. In this way the Indian people used the resources of the prairie to provide for themselves in the winter when the world stopped to rest and regenerate.

With the coming of the cold weather, the Indian families drifted back to their winter cedar plank homes at the edge of rivers or near the ocean. Here the bounty taken from the prairie, woods and waters sustained them. There were baskets of dried meat and berries and rows of



Memoirs of Nisqually, Lucille McDonald, Ed.

Joseph Heath writes in his diary about the winter at Steilacoom Farm.

dried salmon hanging overhead. During the winter women worked on their baskets, tanned hides, and made clothing. Cattails were sewn into mats to hang on the walls to discourage the winter winds from entering.

Steilacoom Farm

On December 13, 1844, Joseph Heath, an English gentleman farmer, moved into a crude cabin on what is now Western State Hospital grounds. The cabin had been abandoned by a former settler enticed there from the Red River in Canada by the Hudson's Bay Company. Heath noted in his diary that "the winds from the four quarters of Heaven had free

admission to the cabin." Heath's diary provides us with more descriptions of winter on the Steilacoom prairie.

Friday, January 3rd, 1845: Repaired damages to the house and dairy occasioned by the gale of Tuesday. Wainscoted part of my room with cedar bark...adding comfort by keeping the house warm.

Friday, January 10th, 1845: Mount Rainier presented a beautiful and singular appearance about half an hour before sunrise...The Indian camp (is) increasing, forming a complete village about 400 yards from my house.

(Continued on page 3)

HISTORIC FORT STEILACOOM ASSOCIATION

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President's Message

To all our members and friends, a very Happy New Year from your museum's Board of Directors.

To the Board, to our hard-working, multi-talented maintenance crew, Chuck Collier and Jack Langston, to Barbara Smith and to all the unsung contributors and supporters who made 1995 such a productive year, my warmest, best wishes for a Happy New Year.

As I think about everything your museum accomplished this year, my first reaction, of course, is pride; immediately followed by amazement. Whew! Just how did we do it all?

The most viable changes would be the splendid additions to our interpretive center in Quarters 4. Special credit and thanks are due to our Director, Shea Munroe, and to Lyle Dunkin, Chuck Collier, Jack Langston and Tom Melberg.

This year, again, we hosted a large number of school children, their parents and chaperones. We had home schooling groups, family groups, and hundreds of fourth and ninth graders from public and private schools. Lastly, just before Christmas, we hosted a Clover Park High School class which performed the trial of Leschi in Quarters 2 as part of their Washington State history course. Special credit and thanks to Anna Fitzgerald, Shea Munroe and Barbara Smith.



Children enjoyed ornament making and story telling at the fort's 1859 Christmas.

In December we produced the first of a series of books. The inaugural publication is entitled *Christmas in the Northwest 1791-1929*.^{*} Our secretary, Orville Stout, designed and published this charming book compiled by one of our members, Gary Fuller Reese of the Tacoma Public Library. And Carol Neufeld made it all happen. We note, with much gratitude, that Gary will be compiling the materials for the other books as well. ^{*}Copies of this limited edition book may be obtained by mailing your check for ten dollars plus \$2 for postage and handling to the museum.

For the second year, a highlight of our calendar has been the Memorial Day Weekend Civil War Reenactment in Fort Steilacoom Park. While there is no direct connection between the Confederate Army and Fort Steilacoom, nevertheless we have co-sponsored the event with the Washington Civil War Association because of the splendid exposure the event provides your museum. If you haven't toured the encampment yet, be sure to do so this next year; you're in for a treat of historic proportions.

We ended this year with charm and style on Saturday, December 9th. For some two hundred children and parents we provided an afternoon of the type of Christmas activities which they would have enjoyed on the same date in 1859. They were entertained

by Father Christmas (Robert Demorest) story telling, ornament making, refreshments, and a tour of quarters which were brought to life by dozens of reenactors in uniform and period attire.

This was followed by a glorious, candlelit evening in Quarters 2. Colonel Casey and Mrs. Casey and their daughters entertained visitors in period attire from Fort Nisqually, Steilacoom City, Olympia and other settlements on Puget's Sound. The Pierce College Chamber Choir added youthful charm and lovely singing to the whole affair. Many thanks to the chair, Ken Morgan, who joins me in giving a deep and heartfelt bow to Barbara Smith, Shea Munroe, Anna Fitzgerald, Bo Cooper, Pauline Hainse, Fort Nisqually, Ron and Ardie Herbel, Catherine Grimm, Tom Melberg, Moseby's Rangers and the many other contributors, volunteers and reenactors who made this first annual celebration so memorable.

A special thank you to Susie and Bob Lyle of Gig Harbor and Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Bowen of Glenoma for the masses of holly, fir and cedar which were used in Quarters 1 and 2 and to Dolly Josiah for making the decorations used in Quarters 2.

Compliments were so lavish and the events were so successful that they'll be repeated next Christmas.

Raymond J. Egan

Winter Life (continued from page 1)

Wednesday, January 13th, 1847: A clear house again. All my visitors left after breakfast. Threshing peas with all hands. Heavy fall of snow with gales—the snow six inches (deep). Mr. Smith took my watch to be cleaned.

Thursday, January 14th, 1847: (The) country presents the appearance of winter scenes in Norway, the fir trees laden with snow and icicles a yard in length hanging from the house. All my people are thrashing peas and foddering sheep. Most thankful I am enabled to do so. Can't think where they will find food for all the company's sheep should the frost and snow continue.

Saturday, January 16th, 1847: Gale from the northeast. Expected the roof of my house would be carried off any moment, but thank God, no mischief done. Thermometer (at) 5 degrees below zero.

Sunday, January 17, 1847: It is so cold that I cannot keep myself warm in bed tho covered with 4 blankets and having a fire burn all nite. Many of my potatoes are frozen. I don't yet know the extent of the mischief. Indians' horses (are) dying in all directions. Northeast gales.

Friday, December 15th, 1848: Finished repairing the chair, making it stronger than it has been the last five years. Wish I could say the same for myself. Legs much swollen. Snow.

Saturday, December 16th, 1848: Very unwell. Keep indoors. Rain. Awful gales.

Saturday, December 17th, 1848: Threshing peas to fodder (the) sheep. ...Snow. Gales.

Wednesday, December 20th, 1848: Low 2 below zero....My legs are greatly swollen and (am) afraid to take medicine, the weather is so cold....The water (is) freezing within two feet of the fire.

Monday, December 25th, 1848: Gave all my people eight pounds of flour each, no molasses - being frozen. Alone all day. Thinking of all dear to me. God bless them.

Tuesday, December 26, 1848: Thank God a change in the weather towards night.

Sunday, December 31st, 1848: Edgar, (a shepherd from England), remained the day and slept. (We) drank health to all our friends and many happy years to come.

Heath labored until February 9, 1849, when his diary ends. Dr. Tolmie, Chief Factor at Fort Nisqually, had Heath moved to the fort so he would receive proper care. Heath finally died March 7, 1849, of pneumonia aggravated by heart disease.

Fort Steilacoom

On August 24, 1849, Captain Bennett N. Hill of the First Artillery rented the Steilacoom farm for the U.S. government. The army occupied the fort from 1849 to 1868.

William Peck, a soldier in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, served at Fort Steilacoom from September 7, 1860 to April 8, 1861. This section of his diary describes the sappers practice of producing siege material in snow and rain.

January 7, 1861: The weather during the past week has been dull enough. Rain fell for three or four days, and the last two, snow accompanied it in good quantities....The men continue to be employed on making siege material, which labor consists in gathering hazel from the woods and forming (wooden devices that) helped protect soldiers from the enemy weapons.

January 13, 1861: We have been occupied in practice at siege material. The weather has been snow, rain, and sun, and our life corresponds with the elements.

January 29, 1861: The abominable rain continues. Almost every day is wet....The detachment(s) are engaged in practice at making siege materials, when the weather will (permit).

Lieutenant Kautz was assigned to Fort Steilacoom in 1853. He served there various times, doing major reconstruction of the fort in 1858. The winter of that same year he and other

officers and men at the fort took a stand opposing the sentencing and execution of Leschi.

January 4, 1858: We had a fall of snow last night, and it was very wet and sloppy underfoot. "C" and "H" Company moved their quarters today into the new building. I had some copies made of the plan of Connell's prairie which will be used in Leschi's defense before the Governor.

January 10, 1858: The ground was heavily covered with snow this morning....I made a sweep of old papers in my desk.

An Indian friend of my husband used to say, "I love to sit among the trees and listen to them talk." On a cold, wintry night on the Steilacoom Prairie the trees and prairies still whisper to us of:

Indian gatherers and hunters;
 Weary travelers and settlers
 who made this place home.
 Farmer Heath and his Indian
 helpers;
 Soldiers of Fort Steilacoom and
 the tragic death of Leschi.

All we have to do is listen.

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